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**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RESCINDS RABIES ALERT AND  
REMINDS RESIDENTS TO AVOID INTERACTION WITH UNFAMILIAR/WILD ANIMALS**

**Indian River County--**

Indian River County Health Department is rescinding the rabies alert for Indian River County.

In total, there were 3 unprovoked raccoon attacks on humans in May. In addition, there was a confirmed case of rabies in a domestic animal (wild/feral cat) with an associated human exposure. There were 2 other cases of rabid animals in Indian River County between May and June with associated human exposures.

Indian River County Health Department has continued to have reports from residents interacting with wild/feral cats, suffering from bites and/or scratches from these animals. The health department and Indian River County Animal Control would like to remind residents to avoid interacting with wildlife.

**What should you do if an animal bites you?** Seek care promptly after any animal bites you. Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for five to ten minutes. Go to your family doctor, hospital or county health department for medical attention immediately.

**How can I protect myself from getting rabies?**

Avoid direct contact with unfamiliar animals:

- **Do not** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild or stray animals (including cats) with open garbage cans.
- Enjoy wild animals (raccoons, skunks, foxes) from afar.
- **Do not** feed birds or your pets outdoors.
- **Never** adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Do not try to nurse sick animals to health. Call animal control for assistance.
- Teach children **never** to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. "Love your own, leave other animals alone" is a good principle for children to learn.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas, where they might come in contact with people and pets.



## Be a responsible pet owner:

- Keep vaccinations up to date for all dogs, cats, and ferrets. This requirement is important not only to keep your pets from getting rabies, but also to provide a barrier of protection for you, if your animal is bitten by a rabid wild animal.
- Don't use your hands to break up a fight between animals.
- Keep your pets under direct supervision and leashed so they do not come in contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately.
- Call your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood. They may be unvaccinated and could be infected by the disease.
- Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.
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Rabies is a deadly viral disease that can be prevented but not cured. The virus is spread through saliva and can be passed to another animal or a person, usually through a bite. Infection may also occur if the saliva enters open wounds, the mouth, or eyes of another animal or person.

There is no treatment for rabies after symptoms of the disease appear. However, the rabies vaccine regimen provides immunity to rabies when given after an exposure or for protection before an exposure occurs. Although rabies among humans is rare in the United States, every year an estimated 18,000 people receive rabies pre-exposure vaccinations, and an additional 40,000 receive vaccinations after being exposed to rabies.

Pre-exposure vaccination is recommended for persons in high-risk groups, such as veterinarians, animal handlers, and certain laboratory workers. In addition, international travelers likely to come in contact with animals in areas with dog rabies and where they might not have immediate access to appropriate medical care should be considered for rabies vaccinations.

For further information, please contact Indian River County Health Department's Environmental Health Division at 772-794-7440 or Animal Control at 772-226-3485 or the link to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Rabies page at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/> .

